

Judy Kruzich



Gretchen Geller



Mike Paffhausen



Curt Quist



The MONTANA STANDARD

HONORING

2022

LOCAL HEROES

Harold
Bruce



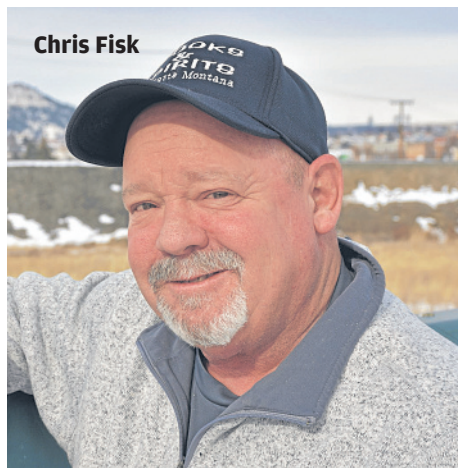
Krissy
Kraczkowsky



Selena
Frye



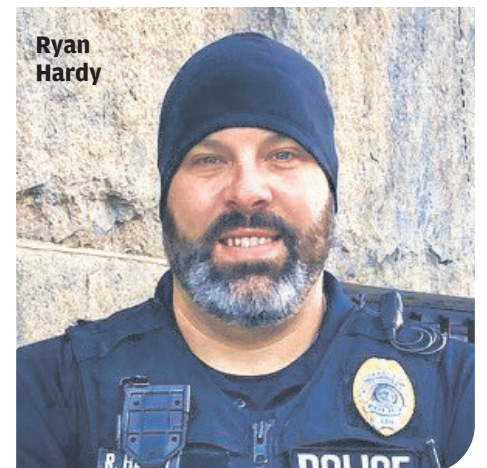
Chris Fisk



Sandi
Seccomb



Ryan
Hardy



Honoring Local Heroes project still going strong

When an idea is good enough, it takes on a life of its own. Almost from the moment Father Patrick Beretta said in 2020, “I think we should find a way to honor the everyday heroes who have braved the pandemic to make life better for all of us” the idea basically said, “OK, thanks, stand back, I’ll take it from here.”

Co-founders Stephanie Sorini, executive director of the Butte-Silver Bow Chamber of Commerce; Ron Davis, CEO of Butte Broadcasting; and myself all enthusiastically jumped on board with Father Beretta on this, and everybody we talked to about it said, “We love this. Let’s gooooo!” or words to that effect. And so we were off and running, and 11 people were recognized, given \$1,000 checks, and roundly applauded.

Last year, the idea decided that it just wasn’t content to be a one-hit wonder, and



DAVID MCCUMBER

so Year 2 happened, and was also a rousing success. Which made this year’s Local Heroes event — and the section you’re reading right now — all but inevitable.

For the third straight year, members of the public nominated heroes, and the founding four of us chose 10 winners from that amazing list.

While the pandemic is thankfully receding in our lives, we have many other challenges in Butte that require the dedication, hard work and good cheer of local heroes. And this year’s list is every bit as inspiring as the first two — for a variety of contributions to the daily richness that we call living in Butte.

Sponsors who have made the program possible this year include Glacier Bank, Butte Auto, Town Pump, Leo McCarthy/State Farm and Mariah’s Challenge,

Montana Technological University, the Copper King Hotel, Montana Precision Products, Community Counseling and Correctional Services, Montana Resources, Payne West Insurance, Wendy’s, Butte Broadcasting (KBOW 550am, KOPR 94.1FM, and KGLM 97.7fm), the Butte-Silver Bow Chamber of Commerce, Headframe Spirits, Butte Catholic Community North and The Montana Standard.

The 10 people chosen and profiled in this section will each be rewarded with a \$1,000 prize, to be spent locally. Again, their work speaks for itself, but it also reflects the incredible nature of this unique community, those thousands of points of light that carpet the Richest Hill.

We do not expect the third annual Local Heroes event to be the last. After all, the idea is now a confirmed southwest Montana resident. When I asked it for a quote for this story, the idea said, “I’m not going anywhere.”



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St. Patrick and the Immaculate Conception Parishes along with Montana Tech Catholic Campus Ministry would like to congratulate our local Heroes!

We are so grateful for your contribution to making our entire community better!

“THE GREAT BUTTE RENAISSANCE HAS BEGUN WITH YOU!”

Judy Kruzich

‘A fierce protector and advocate for all animals’

MATTHEW KIEWIET

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Judy Kruzich will tell you herself. She isn’t even completely sure how she wound up doing what she does.

After a conversation the landscape begins to come into focus. Kruzich’s warmth, kindness and selflessness — along with some sharp book-keeping chops — make her an outstanding leader and a hero of the Butte community.

Kruzich, 69, is the leader and organizer of the Butte Spay and Neuter Task Force, a nonprofit organization that helps animals of low-income families by offering free spay and neuter services.

The taskforce’s website states: “Our purpose is to make spay/neuter affordable for everyone: low- to moderate-income households, those who take care of feral colonies or ranch animals, the elderly or on a fixed income, or those who have made unwise life choices for which their animals suffer. We are non-judgmental, keeping our eye on the target of helping the animals, and in addition, our community.”

She also manages Spay Montana with executive director Sandy Newton and continues to work with the Montana Spay and Neuter Task Force.

Born and raised in Butte, Kruzich also fosters cats and older dogs so that they don’t have to live out their remaining months or years in a kennel.

“She has helped thousands of animals and their owners by offering free spay and neutering of pets for low income families,” said Jacki Casagrande, who nominated Kruzich to be one of Butte’s Local Heroes. “She also is a fierce protector and advocate for all animals and never says no to helping an animal in need. She donates not only her time in organizing the local spay and neuter clinics but also donates her own funds to helping our community.”

Growing up in Browns Gulch, Kruzich was often around animals. However, she did not anticipate her life would ever become so heavily focused on the well-being of cats and dogs.

“I had no idea; I’m an accountant, basi-



MATTHEW KIEWIET, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Judy Kruzich stands behind an operating table at the headquarters of the Butte Spay and Neuter Task Force on Nov. 21 in Butte.

cally,” Kruzich said with a laugh. “And then I retired from PP&L as an energy trader.”

Kruzich attended Butte High and did not attend college immediately after high school. Instead she got married and helped raise three children. After a divorce, she went back to school and earned an accounting degree from Montana Tech. She turned that into 33 years of steady work with Western Energy — a subsidiary of Montana Power — and PP&L, with the purchase of Montana Power by PP&L becoming final in 1999. Kruzich retired from PP&L in 2013 after 43 years on the work force.

Kruzich started volunteering with the Montana Spay and Neuter Task Force in 2004.

Her friend Phyllis Hargrave, who started the Butte Spay and Neuter Task Force in 1996, recommended Kruzich help out with the task force, which at the time traveled around the state and provided free pop-up, spay-and-neuter clinics.

“So we’d have four or five veterinarians;

they’d come in and we’d fix a couple hundred animals,” Kruzich said. “So then you’d have to have food, drinks and that kind of stuff for the vets and all the volunteers.”

At first Kruzich would help out whenever the task force came to Butte. Eventually, she joined the group of people who traveled around Montana. She didn’t attend all the stops, but she used her accounting background to help out with crucial administrative duties.

Kruzich also dedicated time to the Butte Spay and Neuter Task Force.

“There’s a lot of paperwork,” Kruzich said. “Keeping track of the animals, you’ve got all the surgical forms and all of that kind of stuff. So (there is) a lot of paperwork. That’s what I would do, and write grants, fundraise and that kind of stuff.”

In 2008, Kruzich and Sandy Newton started Spay Montana, which was subsequently taken over by the Lewis and Clark Humane Society. However, in 2019 LCHS jettisoned Spay Montana. Kruzich made

sure that Spay Montana was not lost and still manages it today in addition to her work with the Butte Spay and Neuter Task Force and Montana Spay and Neuter Task Force.

“I mean, we have to have spay and neuter, or we end up with a lot of euthanizing or a lot of dead animals on the street,” she said. “So I took (Spay Montana) back again.”

How does Kruzich do it all? She humbly credits her supporting cast.

“Listen, I couldn’t do any of this if it wasn’t for the volunteers,” Kruzich said. “I’m one person. One person does not define an organization. I surround myself with awesome people. The people that volunteer for us are just amazing. They are there whenever we need them. They do laundry and they shovel snow; whatever it takes to get this done they’re right there to do it. I might orchestrate it here, but I surround myself with excellent people, and they’re just amazing.”

Matthew Kiewiet is the managing editor for The Montana Standard.

Gretchen Geller

Volunteer finds hometown
in Butte

DUNCAN ADAMS

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Gretchen Geller and Butch Gerbrandt spent their first night in Butte at Eddy's Motel. The year was 1993 and Gerbrandt had landed a faculty job at Montana Tech.

Geller's father, Robert Geller, worked as a Presbyterian minister. He had served congregations, missions and colleges in places ranging from uber-rural Ameagle, West Virginia — where many people walked to town and school — to Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Geller's peripatetic childhood required her to attend four years of high school in three different locations.

"I didn't have a hometown," Geller said.

Still, she wasn't prepared to nail her shoes to the floor in one place once she had more freedom of choice. After graduating from Hastings College in Nebraska, Geller joined the Peace Corps. She taught in Ghana, West Africa, for two years — 1967 to 1969.

Geller was just getting started. For a time, she lived and worked in Pennsylvania.

"In those days, anybody who had a bachelor's degree could get a teaching job," she said.

Geller taught in a special education setting.

Separately, she and a man who was both a business and romantic partner started a used bookstore. But the couple was in a bad car crash and he was killed.

Geller was at loose ends. Friends told her to apply for public assistance. When she did just that, she was offered a social services job in York, Pennsylvania.

This became a theme in Geller's life. She would need a job and one would appear.

She traveled next to Wisconsin. During her seven or eight years there, she helped launch Kickapoo Exchange, a Natural Food Co-op, which remains active today in Gays Mills.

Geller then went to work at the Ghost Ranch conference and retreat center, where her father taught seminars during the summer.

It was beautiful country. But as they say



MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Gretchen Geller is photographed in her home on Broadway Street in Butte.

in Montana, you can't eat scenery. She decided to attend nursing school at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. During a country-western dance class she met Gerbrandt, a doctoral student.

Then, as this abridged account suggests, fate and circumstances aligned to bring Geller to Butte, where she found the hometown she'd never had.

And she set about giving back, as her parents would have done.

Gerbrandt, after completing his Ph.D., had accepted a job offer from Montana Tech.

"Little did we know what a Godsend that was," Geller said.

In 1997, Geller and Gerbrandt adopted a daughter, Zhang Yong, now Lew Yong Gerbrandt, from China. She works now as an architect in Washington D.C.

Today, Geller, 77, is theoretically retired. Yet her seemingly tireless service to Mon-

tana Tech, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the larger Butte community garnered her recognition as being among the Mining City's Local Heroes for 2022.

Geller attributes her commitment to service to her parents and the people who gathered at their house who were similarly inclined. She said her father was an activist, which was not unheard of during a time when clergy joined civil rights marches in the South.

Geller witnessed the sense of meaning and purpose and the joy associated with altruism in action.

"I lived with these folks," she said. "I could see what it did for them. My father really taught me to give back. My mom too. It doesn't just drop out of a tree and hit you in the head."

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, dropped with a great big thud — on the world, the nation and Montana. Montana Tech and other schools scrambled to identify strategies to keep students, faculty and staff safe while continuing classes.

Geller signed on to work for the school. She served as Montana Tech's COVID nurse from the fall of 2020 to the spring of 2022. Chancellor Les Cook was effusive in his praise for her work.

"She was an integral member of our campus COVID team by coordinating symptomatic testing, corresponding with faculty on behalf of sick students and as an extremely valuable resource for all campus entities," Cook said.

"During a very difficult time, she served our campus with the utmost attention to personal care that complemented her extensive medical knowledge and experience," he said.

Meanwhile, the Geller/Gerbrandt home on West Broadway Street often buzzes with the spirit of volunteerism.

Geller's service work includes, but is not limited to (the phrase "too numerous to mention" comes to mind:

■ Volunteering with Butte HEART, helping to settle refugees from Afghanistan in Butte.

■ Service on the Safe Space board of directors for more than 20 years.

■ Longtime volunteer and benefactor with the Butte America Foundation.

■ Launched and continues to run a scholarship program for children furthering their education in Nongoma, South Africa.

■ Active in raising funds for the Montana Tech chapter of Engineers Without Borders.

■ Assisting international students needing to secure student visas, as well as working with them to find housing and integrate into the community.



Congratulations to Gretchen Geller, our Local Hero, and Montana Tech Oredigger. We are proud of you and thankful for all you do for Montana Tech, our students, and the community.

Gretchen truly embodies the spirit of Butte like no other. She's a quiet, committed, passionate individual with a huge heart and a willing spirit. We are so proud of you, Gretchen!

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Mike Paffhausen

Insurance agent serves community in multiple ways

KASEY FAUR

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Mike Paffhausen will be one of the first to tell you he has a problem saying no. Specifically when he's being asked to volunteer or serve in some way.

"I've seen a lot of opportunities where I can serve," he said. "As an agent, I work in servitude to clients. I do whatever I can get my hands on."

When Paffhausen isn't working his day job as a State Farm Insurance agent, he serves on a variety of boards including the Butte Local Development Corporation, the Mining City Little Guy Football League, The National Association of Insurance & Financial Advisors Montana and the Upper Clark Fork Remediation and Restoration Advisory Council.

In the past, he's also served on the Butte Chamber of Commerce board.

Paffhausen is a founding member of the Uptown Butte Master Plan Association, which has been meeting for the past five or six years. The group, Paffhausen said, is a group of business owners who came together to draft an envisioning document for what they want to see Uptown Butte become.

Because Paffhausen is both a business owner and has a background as a professional civil engineer, he felt the Uptown Butte Master Plan Association, was right up his alley.



PROVIDED PHOTO BY GARRETT THOMPSON

Financial literacy is something that's been personally important to Mike Paffhausen and he's been working since last year to get classes required in Montana High Schools.

"If it involves Butte and if it involves our outcomes, I want to be a part of it, I want to help influence it and shape it," Paffhausen said.

Paffhausen's latest project has been ad-

vocating for the Montana Office of Public Instruction to add financial literacy to its curriculum for high school students.

Financial literacy is something that's been personally important to Paffhausen

since he graduated from Carroll College in 2009 and received a book called "Life After Graduation: Your Guide to Success."

The book inspired him to make a list of a number of things he needed to do, including "buy life insurance," "create a budget," and "get a will." The book and the lessons learned from it were so important to Paffhausen, he wanted to make sure other students benefitted.

He started fundraising to ensure books were given to other future seniors upon graduation, but last year, he decided he wanted to use his role at NAIFA Montana to take the goal one step further by working to get financial literacy required in Montana High Schools.

Since last year, he's worked with several different people and organizations to get the Montana OPI to add financial literacy to schools.

As it stands now, after months of work and a number of different meetings and presentations, the rule is close to the finish line, and Paffhausen said the outlook that it will be passed is good. He also expects that his role and the role of the other financial advisors at NAIFA Montana in the classes will be ongoing.

"It's something I think every family deserves to have: the skills to succeed financially," Paffhausen said. "Not everyone will, but they deserve to leave school and enter workforce with the skills to succeed financially. There's a sense of righteousness in this. We're doing it because it's the right thing to do."

Paffhausen said he was grateful to be nominated for Local Heroes, and that he owes a lot of the thanks to his wife, Beth, his team at State Farm and role models and examples in his life he said taught him the importance of service.

"I'm super honored and humbled to have been considered for nomination. The only piece of advice I'd give, is if you see a place you can serve, follow your gut and serve," Paffhausen said.



Butte Sylvan Learning would like to thank all the heroes. We see some of you every day and some of you, we never see. We appreciate the sacrifices you make. Thank you for the ways you serve our community and never expect recognition.



Congratulations!

MIKE PAFFHAUSEN

On Your Local Hero Award

We appreciate all you are doing for our Community

Tom & Wendy Downey

Curt Quist

Pours time and heart into Butte Furniture Bank

MIKE SMITH
mike.smith@mtstandard.com

To Curt Quist, giving time and service for others is more than a calling.

"I think that's why we were put on this Earth," he says. "We're not individuals, we're community."

Quist was 70 when Kim Mickelson, a fellow parishioner at Gold Hill Lutheran Church in Butte, shared an idea about starting a "furniture bank."

She and a friend were in the furniture business and had given free furniture to a woman who had just come out of the Butte Pre-Release Center with nothing.

Mickelson knew others were in need and told Quist and others on a church outreach



MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Curt Quist has had a lead role in the Butte Furniture Bank and still does. At 75, he joins others in picking up donated furniture, taking it to a warehouse, and delivering it to folks in need.

committee about it in 2018.

"People were moving into apartments or housing and had no furniture," said Quist. "They were homeless or had just moved here under various circumstances and would get housing but had no furniture."

They talked to Action Inc., were told a Butte Rotary Club member had a similar idea, and within six months, more than 200 pieces of gently used furniture in good condition had been donated and delivered to nearly 20 families in Butte.

The Butte Furniture Bank is now a reg-

istered nonprofit organization and in five years has racked up numbers far more impressive. Staggering, actually.

As of Nov. 22, it had received 3,929 pieces of furniture — beds, dressers, kitchen tables, end tables, coffee tables, sofas and other items — and delivered 3,866 of them to 526 clients, some of them families, some individuals. There's no charge.

"It's amazing," said Quist. "It's amazing the number of people in this town who have donated to this cause."

Quist has had a lead role in the Butte Furniture Bank and still does. At 75, he joins others in picking up donated furniture, taking it to a warehouse, and delivering it to folks in need.

There are lots of used furniture donors, too, including Steele's Furniture.

It was Dan Steele who nominated Quist as a Local Hero.

"He has volunteered untold hours to serve the underprivileged through this program," Steele wrote.

Those in need include people who are struggling because they're sick, have lost a job, or relocating because of domestic violence or other factors. There's other reasons, too.

The Montana Standard wrote about the furniture bank when it was in its infancy in

the fall of 2018.

"We started helping families before we were fully formed," Quist said then.

Action Inc. allowed the group to store donated furniture at its Homeward Bound building in the beginning, but it now has its own warehouse. It also takes in dishes and linens, the latter washed and folded at Dave Isakson's Clean-n-Dry Laundry Services in Butte.

Quist and his wife Jeanette have lived in Butte for 50 years. He worked for the Montana Power Co., which later became part of NorthWestern Energy, for 30 years before retiring in 2004.

Quist has been giving back most of his life. As a Marine serving during the Vietnam War, he worked as an interpreter in villages and orphanages just 10 miles from the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Vietnam.

He has continued serving in various ways to this day. He got some of his passion from his father, Ervin, who loved people even though "he wasn't treated the best in life."

"I never heard him badmouth another person," Quist said. "He might have thought it but it never came out of his mouth."

For information about the Butte Furniture Bank, call 406-603-0692.

Congratulations
to our Local Hero
Curt Quist

And to Everyone Honored as
one of Butte's Many Heroes.



Steele's Furniture family is proud of the hard work you do at the Butte Furniture Bank. We are proud to recognize you and other 2022 Heroes for the work you do to make our community a better place.

Harold Bruce

Local provider dedicated to weekend care to Butte

KASEY FAUR

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On Harold Bruce's nomination form for Local Heroes, his nominator describes him as having a heart of gold. Bruce disagrees with this characterization, and after a quick survey of a couple of the nurses who work with him, it seems he's in the minority opinion.

Bruce, 70, is a vital part of Southwest Montana Community Health Center's ability to serve patients in Butte on weekends, particularly on Sundays. He makes the almost hour-long drive from Twin Bridges four times a week.

On weekends and two other days a week, he is the only provider at the health center's acute care clinic, where patients can make



MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Harold Bruce is photographed in a room on the acute care wing of Southwest Montana Community Health Center, where he works with patients.

a same-day appointment for immediate ailments rather than having to wait to see a doctor.

In his more than 12 years at the clinic, Bruce has treated thousands of patients and also helped teach students from medical programs across the country.

Before Bruce became a nurse practitioner, he was a police officer in Memphis. In 1984, he sustained a traumatic brain injury from being hit on the head with a baseball bat eight times and, unsure if he was going to be

able to resume life as he knew it, he started looking into alternative career options.

Bruce said he's treated several people with TBIs, and everyone is different. He considers himself lucky he can still walk and talk normally, but he thinks the injury affected his ability to sympathize and empathize with others, which is why he disagrees with the assertion that he has a heart of gold.

What Bruce does have though, is a sense of humor. He believes an important part of work is having fun.

"Our side of the clinic has more fun than anybody else," Bruce said. "I mean, if you do as much as we do in a day, you can't have a solemn expression. You gotta have fun. If you don't, you might as well go home, because that stuff wears on you."

In October, Bruce said he diagnosed six unknown cases of cancer. He credits his many years as a detective with being able to make such diagnoses.

"Ninety percent of what I do is about asking the right questions," Bruce said. "And the rest is 'uh-oh, I found this,' and that's how I find as much cancer as I do. And the joke around here amongst the staff is 'Don't let Harold order a test for you.'"

One story he and one of his nurses still talk about is of a patient who came in the clinic several years ago complaining of a rash, and

left with a diagnosis of metastatic thyroid cancer. In this case, the right question was "Why is your neck swollen?"

"But he's alive today because he came in with a rash," which wasn't related to the cancer, Bruce said.

Bruce said he's originally from Mississippi, Tennessee and Arkansas, and a hint of Southern accent in his voice alludes to this. However, he said he's been coming to Montana since he was 11 years old, when his mom brought him to Yellowstone National Park.

He said he's hiked just about everything in Yellowstone, two-thirds of Glacier National Park and all of Zion National Park.

Although he clearly likes to explore, there's one place he goes back to year after year.

Bruce gets one weekend off a year, in May, and he uses it to go to Disney World.

He said he'll retire after he turns 72, but that the health center's CEO has negotiated him to work weekends until he's 75.

When Bruce isn't working, he has a working shop in his barn where he loves to make things, and plenty of other things that keep him busy.

Despite this, he doesn't think he'll ever give up his day job completely.

"I suspect that I'm one of those people that retirement would kill," Bruce said.

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Butte Catholic
Community North





Krissy Krackowsky is photographed in 2020 on the walking trail above Butte. “You have a skill set,” Krackowsky said. “You can use that to help support one of the wonderful organizations we have here in Butte.”
MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD



“Krissy, thank you for sharing your passion & dedication to make Butte a stronger community. We are so proud of the incredible work you do & are blessed to have you on our BOD. Congratulations!”
– BFC Board of Directors





Congratulations, Krissy!!!

2022 Butte Local Hero Winner

We are so proud of you and all of your accomplishments!



Is thankful for you!



Kali Ang Stella



Butte Party Appreciates you!



Celebrating our local heroes.

Butte has a long history of heroes who have always stepped up and shined bright. Congratulations to Krissy Krackowsky, who serves on the St. James Healthcare Foundation board, and all the local heroes being honored this year.



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Krissy Krackowsky

'Multi-faceted cheerleader'
for folks in Butte

MIKE SMITH

mike.smith@mtstandard.com

It would probably take less time to list what community organizations or causes Krissy Krackowsky isn't involved in than to relay those that get her time and involvement.

She has key roles with the St. James Hospital Foundation, Action Inc., the Snoflinga 5K Race and the committee overseeing the Uptown Master Plan.

She was board secretary for the Butte Community Fitness Foundation and has played a major part in the emerging Butte Food Co-Op — and still does.

She was a co-founder of the Butte Front Line Appreciation Group, which

purchased and delivered meals to hospital workers and others during the COVID pandemic.

She helps kids with special needs, helps rescue dogs and fosters pups herself. She really bonded with her latest foster, Mink, and admits that Mink "isn't going anywhere."

She's supported cancer foundations and Mariah's Challenge and the list goes on.

Krackowsky devotes so much time to so many causes, Kali Smelich nominated her as a Local Hero and wonders if "she might have an invisible cape on."

"She is a multifaceted cheerleader for those in her life and those in Butte," Smelich wrote in the nomination. "Rooting for the underdog, the underserved and those in need is the cornerstone of what makes Krissy great."

Krackowsky grew up in Hartford, Connecticut, and lived in Baltimore, Maryland, for many years before she and her husband, Nate Readal, moved to Butte in 2016.

He's a urologist at St. James Healthcare and she works at Copper City Strength and Conditioning coaching CrossFit, LocoMotion and powerlifting. And, of course she's a community volunteer 100 times over.

For several years now, she's been a vol-

unteer and event planner for Butte Special Riders, a summer program that helps kids with physical or learning disabilities learn to ride horses.

"There's a lot of other therapeutic benefits that come from equine therapy," Krackowsky said. "It's really been an amazing, amazing project."

She joined Julie Jaksha and Sonia Zachow in establishing the Front Line effort during COVID. They quickly raised thousands of dollars, used the money to purchase meals from restaurants struggling through shut-downs, and delivered the catered meals to workers.

"It was really a win-win situation and a lot of people engaged in the community," Krackowsky said.

She and her husband fostered lots of dogs in Baltimore. When they got to Butte, Krackowsky walked dogs at the Chelsea Bailey Animal Shelter and now they're fostering dogs here. Mink is their second "foster failure," meaning she's a keeper.

Foster homes, she says, give a dog "a safe and supportive space" and interac-

tions with people and sometimes other dogs prior got getting adopted.

The Butte Food Co-Op has come a long way in a short time. It started with a membership drive in early 2021, was incorporated in April 2021 and has more than 800 member-owners now. They're now looking for an ideal store location.

Krackowsky says her involvement in so many things makes for long days sometimes.

"I work full time but I really like to be able to give back to my community," she said. "That is something that was instilled in me by my parents. My mom does a ton of volunteer work and at an early age, she sort of pulled me along with her, whether it was setting up a nonprofit or even just stuffing envelopes."

A lot of folks can't afford to give money to worthy causes, she says, but a lot of people can give time.

"You have a skill set," Krackowsky said. "You can use that to help support one of the wonderful organizations we have here in Butte."

"It was really a win-win situation and a lot of people engaged in the community."

Krissy Krackowsky



"Krissy we are so proud of you for everything you do for our community. You will always be our hero" Love, Nate, Dewey, Bruno and Minky.

Ryan Hardy

Local hero shies away from the limelight

TRACY THORNTON

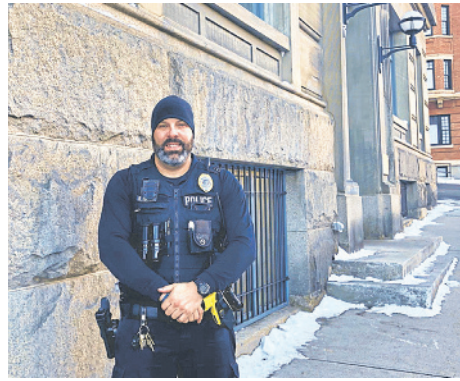
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Officer Ryan Hardy of Butte-Silver Bow Law Enforcement is “not a limelight kind of guy.” It makes him more than a bit uncomfortable.

While appreciative of being chosen as one of Butte’s 2022 Local Heroes, Hardy does not see himself as such. To Hardy, he’s just doing his job not only as a cop but more importantly, as a member of the Butte community.

That sentiment doesn’t surprise his boss, Butte-Silver Bow County Sheriff Ed Lester.

“Ryan is a good cop who loves his community,” said Lester. “He is a great repre-



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Ryan Hardy, an officer with Butte-Silver Bow Law Enforcement, remembers the lessons from his youth and being impressed with how giving people of the community were, and their kindness and generosity stuck with him.

sentative of our department.”

Nominated by fellow Butte resident, Denise Kelly, Hardy feels there are others more deserving.

Kelly doesn’t think so. She described Hardy as an “inspiration to our community.”

According to Kelly, the Butte cop is not only dedicated to Butte, but its people, too.

“He’s just an awesome guy,” said Kelly,

“and puts everything he has into making Butte a better place.”

The Butte man still remembers the lessons from his youth, hanging with his dad, Jerry Hardy, as his father asked for donations for Little League. The young Hardy was impressed with how giving people of the community were and their kindness and generosity stuck with him.

“It definitely had an effect on me,” said Hardy. “A lot of people here in Butte will give you the shirt off their backs.”

A graduate of Butte High School, Hardy, 39, has been a cop for 10 years now.

“Law enforcement always intrigued me,” said Hardy.

A decade later that intrigue remains, and Hardy is devoted to his job. When not on the clock, in his spare time, he has served as president of the Butte Police Protective Association, and through the years, has volunteered with Special Olympics, the Polar Plunge, Relay for Life, and a holiday tradition he holds near and dear, Shop with a Cop, which he took over in 2014.

Made possible through generous donations from not just local businesses but residents, too, Shop with a Cop this year will allow Hardy and other first responders to spend some quality time shopping with 20 children in need.

According to Lester, Hardy has been heavily involved with Shop with a Cop and Special Olympics.

“He is not just a guy who works hard when he is on the clock,” said Lester. “He works hard in the community even when he’s off and he has a soft spot for kids.”

Hardy, who has a 10-year-old son, Crosby, does, indeed, enjoy helping Butte’s younger generation.

“He is incredibly dedicated to our city and its people,” said Kelly, “and puts everything he has into making it a better place for children like his own son to grow up in.”

Leading up to the shopping spree, Hardy and his crew of volunteers are busy, but, he explained they are trying to touch as many lives as possible with the holiday program.

“It’s a lot of work and lot of stress,” he said, “but it’s a good feeling for everyone.”

As for his reward, well, it’s something that money just can’t buy.

“Getting to see these kids enjoy their Christmas is priceless,” said Hardy.

Admittedly, Hardy’s chosen profession has had its ups and downs, but whether he is helping people, out on patrol, or working to get drugs off the streets, the Butte officer feels he is helping to make Butte a better place.

“I’m just doing my bit,” he said.

CONGRATULATIONS
to our local Butte Heroes!
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Ryan Hardy
Butte Silver Bow
County
Police Officer



Sandi Seccomb

'Embodies the traditional Butte philosophy'

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Sandi Seccomb walks into the Butte Sunrise Kiwanis meeting every Wednesday morning at Perkins ready with a smile, a joke she reads aloud to the room, open ears ready for whoever the weekly speaker might be and a contagious can-do attitude.

"She just wants to cheer people up and make people's lives better," said fellow Sunrise Kiwanis member Cheryl Peterslie.

"She is totally my hero," added Sue MacPherson. "I'm very proud of her."

Seccomb, 82, is dependable, devoted and delightful to be around. Those characteristics and more, along with her extensive body of work, make her one of Butte's local heroes.

"Sandi embodies the traditional Butte philosophy of one for all and all for one," said MacPherson, who nominated Seccomb to be one of the 2022 Local Heroes. "This steadfast community pillar has never wavered. Her dedication to the needy of Butte is an unconditional commitment of her love for Butte and her people."

Born and raised in Butte, Seccomb worked as a banker for 40 years. She was employed by four different banks — Miner's Bank, Bank of Montana, Northwest Bank and Wells Fargo — all in the same location.

The Girls Central grad is now on the board of directors for Continental Gardens, Action Inc. and the Belmont Senior Center. She's also an Ambassador for the Butte Chamber of Commerce as well as a charter member and past president of Butte

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Chris Fisk

Former teacher helped students learn value of service

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They nicknamed the teenager "Florida" because that was the state she once called home.

She moved to Butte in 2012 or 2013 to live with grandparents after life with her parents had bottomed out. But that arrangement too had soured.

At Butte High School her classes included Montana History, taught by Chris Fisk. Among other innovative teaching approaches, Fisk kept a cupboard in his classroom stocked with food. He knew some students came to school hungry.

Fisk knew that Florida's stay with grandparents had not worked out.

"She was couch hopping with friends," he said. "All of a sudden her grades started to slip drastically. She'd run out of couches."

Fisk noticed that Florida was putting food from the cupboard into her backpack. She eventually acknowledged she'd spent two nights in early May under a bridge on South Montana Street and had encountered addicts there who scared her.

Fisk said a colleague found a temporary foster home for Florida. She later secured an apartment.

Florida graduated soon after. Her parents flew in for the ceremony and her grandparents attended.

Later, Fisk learned Florida had returned



DUNCAN ADAMS, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Chris Fisk, born and raised in Dillon, expresses great affection for Butte and gratitude for putting down roots in the Mining City. The former high school history teacher introduced hundreds of students to the value of serving the community.

to the Sunshine State and had opened a small eatery in a KOA campground. Florida told him that customers who disclosed that they were homeless were quietly directed to a free supply of food housed in an area known as "Fisk's Cupboard."

Today, Chris Fisk, 58, seems to approach Butte, his adopted hometown, with a metaphorical cupboard at the ready to serve the community.

During a recent interview he repeatedly talked about the good fortune of living in the Mining City.

"I'm a fortunate man," he said.

Fisk was born and raised in Dillon. His father, Russell Fisk, was a high school history teacher. His mother, Joan, ran a shoe store and then became an X-ray technician.

Fisk attended college for a couple of years and then took a break to work in radio. He eventually experienced a change of heart about radio and its low-wattage compensation.

"I felt they were starvation wages and I felt I could do better," Fisk said.

He eventually graduated with a master's

degree in education. His first job was in Lincoln, where his focus included special education.

"It was a great place to learn the profession," Fisk said.

Two years later, he hired on at Butte High School, where he again worked in special education before becoming a history teacher.

And seemed to find his niche.

Fisk started the Butte High School Montana History Club and it was successful at drawing students.

"I think it created a place for everyone, whether they were a struggling student or a valedictorian," he said.

In time, members tackled service work in the Butte community that provided a tangible link to the city's inestimable history. These experiences were designed to teach students also about the responsibilities of citizenship and the value of volunteerism.

"Over the years, Chris has had a very positive impact on hundreds, if not thousands of students," wrote Judy Chadwick, who nominated Fisk for the Local Heroes honor.

"I have personally observed how much his former and current students like and respect Chris," she wrote.

Fisk and his students were participants also in the campaign to establish a memorial for firefighters and others killed by devastating explosions on Jan. 15, 1895, in Butte's warehouse district, east of Arizona Street.

He said his belief in community service was modeled within his family of origin.

And Butte offers fertile ground, he said.

"There's such a sense of community here," Fisk said. "If Norman Rockwell was still alive, he'd paint Butte."

Fisk and his wife, Becky, have five children. Two are adopted and three are foster children.

"I'm a fortunate man," he said. "I've been fortunate and blessed to be able to raise my family in Butte America."

Seccomb

From 13

Sunrise Kiwanis.

“They just do so much good,” Seccomb said. “It just kind of makes you want to be a part of it.”

She also volunteers at the food bank, and in the past has been on the board for Safe Space and Crimestoppers.

Seccomb’s urge to volunteer and give back to Butte is rarely, if ever, satisfied. Before taking on more commitments at home, she said, she used to be able to devote even more of her time.

“This town is wonderful for volunteers,” Seccomb said. “And just anything that comes up you see people take part and volunteer. A few years ago, I worked when Special Olympics was here serving lunches. That was just really heartwarming and great. I think you get back more than you give.”

As Seccomb also points out, the bonds between friends are strengthened while working together helping the community.

Like any organization, continuity

often goes hand-in-hand with success. When coworkers know each other’s strengths and weaknesses, there’s an added level of trust that develops gradually over time. They’re able to depend on one another, and pick up the slack as they see fit.

Seccomb said that the same is true with a volunteer group. At the Food Bank, for example, people work so well together because they’ve been working side-by-side for years.

“That place is just so well run,” she said. “It’s just a really well-oiled machine. And they take care of everybody.

“We have a huge volunteer group. They treat their volunteers very well and we have a potluck a couple of times a year.”

To top it all off, Seccomb is still married to her husband of 62 years, Leroy. They have three children, eight grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

One of her grandchildren, Clay Seccomb, was recently honored as part of the 2022 class of Butte’s 20 under 40.

Matthew Kiewiet is the managing editor for The Montana Standard.



MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Butte’s local hero Sandi Seccomb is photographed in front of the Action Inc. building in Uptown Butte.

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Town Pump's Selena Frye is photographed in the Excelsior Avenue store where she's worked for five years in Butte.

MEAGAN THOMPSON,
THE MONTANA STANDARD

Selena Frye

Smile, upbeat attitude
are contagious

TRACY THORNTON
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Five years ago, Selena Frye landed a job as a clerk for Town Pump at 901 N. Excelsior Ave. It was the first job she had ever held. Prior to that time, the 45-year-old Butte woman was a stay-at-home mom with a growing family to care for.

Naturally, she still looks after her family, but she now has extended that care to her customers, too.

"I love it!" said Frye.

Her "pay it forward" mentality is just one of the many reasons she was named one of Butte's 2022 Local Heroes. Frye could not have foreseen being chosen and is humbled that her customers think she is worthy.

"I feel honored that people think that about me," said Frye. "I try to treat others the way I want to be treated."

One of her thankful customers is Jacqueline Marez, who nominated Frye "to show her how much we appreciate her."

According to Marez, Frye deserves to be recognized because she is not only a hard worker, but has a heart of gold, too.

"There isn't a customer that goes to that store who doesn't know who she is," said Marez. "She makes the people of Butte's day every day."

While Marez admires Frye's work ethic, she also appreciates the clerk's sense of humor, too.

"Her presence is so warm and inviting," said Marez. "You will always leave laughing or with a smile on your face."

The Butte clerk appreciates the comments made by Marez.

"I am very honored to not only be nominated, but to receive this award," she said.

By her own admission, Frye had a difficult childhood which, she believes, actually helped to shape her ideals as she got older.

"In my adult life I try to treat people kindly because I know what it's like to be treated unkindly," she said.

Customer Sandy McGee described Frye as "just an awesome person."

"She is always cheery and sweet to everybody," said McGee, "and that can make a big difference in your day."

Frye grinned as she stood listening to McGee.

"I really love my customers," said Frye.

Frye enjoys coming to work each day, where, she said, she has met some of the greatest people.

"They are all so kind," she said.

Each work day, Frye's goal is to put a smile on everyone's face who comes into the store. That mission has been accomplished time and time again, according to Joe Orrino, who delivers products for Mile High Beverage.

"Selena works really hard and makes this place clean and welcoming," said Orrino. "She has always got a smile on her face, which makes you smile right back."

He added, "We have had some great conversations, too."

Co-worker Remy Fabian looks forward to working a shift with Frye.

"I am so glad she got this award," said Fabian, "she easily deserves it."

Fabian said that while Frye gladly helps her customers, that kindness extends to her co-workers as well.

"She always has a bright attitude and is always willing to help," said Fabian. "Her enthusiasm is contagious."

Now that the news of being named a local hero has finally started to sink in, Frye is even happier that she chose to always try to be kind.

"Hopefully, I can inspire others to do the same," she said.

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